

MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Director-Comptroller

SUBJECT : Feasibility of Using Recycled Paper

REFERENCES : (a) MFR dtd 28 Jul 71, same subject

(b) Memo dtd 15 Jul 71 to DCI fr [REDACTED]  
subject: ECOTIP

STATINTL

1. This memorandum is for your information only.

2. As you requested, we have studied the feasibility of the use of recycled paper by the Agency. There is no question as to feasibility since 20 percent of the fiber used in paper manufacturing today comes from the recycling of paper waste. Thus, the Agency is already in general terms, as well as in specific areas noted below, a user of recycled paper. However, solutions to a number of recycling problems are required before the feasibility of an expanded program can be assured. The major problems toward which research and development work is now being directed are outlined in Reference (a), attached.

3. The Agency obtains 85-90 percent of its paper requirements through the Government Printing Office (GPO), and most of the remainder through the General Services Administration's Federal Supply Service (FSS). Due to the need for further advances in recycling technology, GPO has no plans at this time to stock paper having a higher recycled content than the present 20 percent average. Many of the paper products obtained through FSS are in the lower quality, utilitarian category (paperboard, toweling, tissues, etc.), and such items are currently more adaptable to being produced with a predominant portion of recycled fibers. FSS has adopted recycled fiber specifications for several paper items, and continued progress is planned. Accordingly, we will continue to obtain recycled paper products through FSS as rapidly as their new standards are adopted.

4. We will continue to keep abreast of all progress in this matter and will expand the Agency's use of recycled paper as rapidly as it becomes feasible.

Robert S. Wattles  
Acting Deputy Director  
for Support

2 Atts:

Att 1: Reference (a)

ADMINISTRATIVE - INTERNAL USE ONLY

28 JUL 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Feasibility of Using Recycled Paper

REFERENCE: Memo dtd 15 Jul 71 to DCI fr [REDACTED] subject: STATINTL  
ECOTIP

1. The concept of more extensive use of recycled paper products has been studied in coordination with research specialists who are directly involved in production and recycling technology for the paper products and printing industries as well as the Federal Government. At present, an average of 20 percent of this Agency's, and of the Nation's, total paper consumption is coming from fiber reclaimed from wastepaper. The National Academy of Sciences has recommended in a report to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare that goals should be set to increase such reuse to 35 percent by 1985. Industry, in general, is accepting its responsibility toward achievement of this goal and has made encouraging progress in improving the quality of recycled products. In this connection, the management of pulpwood forests has also advanced to the extent that this Nation is now growing more pulpwood than it consumes. Further advancements are also expected through improved forestry practices since fires, insects, and disease are now destroying more trees than are used for pulp production. It is foreseen, that pulpwood consumption may equal or outstrip production by 1985, however, if the use of paper products continues to expand. At present, the Federal Government uses only one-half of 1 percent of the paper produced for printing in the United States.

2. Effective solutions to the following problems with recycled paper are presently required and are being sought by scientists and engineers to increase its potential use:

a. The successful recycling of wastepaper is dependent upon its being kept separate from other refuse. Collection, sorting, and transportation now account for 90 percent of all expenditures for recycling, with the result that the cost of recycled products is prohibitive, except in those regions where a recycling facility is located near a concentrated supply of wastepaper.

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- b. Recycling produces more pollution than the processing of wood fibers due to the presence of more acids and unusable fibers in the wastepaper supply. This pollution problem can be expected to increase since wastepaper can only be recycled twice due to degeneration of the fibers. The presence of unusable fibers and pollutants, therefore, increases in proportion to the amount of previously recycled fibers contained in the wastepaper supply.
  - c. The quality of recycled products is not yet assured, and developments are needed as to quality controls and improved machinery in the mills that use wastepaper.
  - d. It is impossible to produce recycled paper of higher quality than that contained in the wastepaper supply. For this reason the products of recycled waste are now limited primarily to lower quality paper products such as paper-board, building papers, tissues, and toweling.
  - e. Commercial paper suppliers and printing houses generally do not recommend the use of recycled paper for printed matter. Their reluctance is primarily due to the lack of quality assurance and higher cost. It has not been found satisfactory for use on printing presses such as those used by the Agency printing facilities. Some commercial firms have found it adequate for low-quality multilith work. Recycled paper for printing production can be obtained if the customer insists, but no guarantee is provided against its inherent faults.
  - f. The 100 percent reclaimed paper now marketed on a trial basis for typing correspondence does not equal the quality of paper now used for this purpose. Neat erasures and corrections cannot be made to its soft-textured surface. This problem was confirmed by internal Agency tests of the "Ecology" brand papers distributed by a local paper firm.
3. The shortcomings described above will undoubtedly be solved as research and development work progress. Until solutions are reached, the Government Printing Office (GPO) is understandably reluctant to commit the Federal agencies to an all-out program aimed toward the immediate, 100 percent use of recycled paper. GPO advises that an opinion to this effect will be reflected in a forthcoming report from its Chief of Technical Research Operations, Dr. Hobbs. The Agency obtains 85-90 percent of its paper requirements through GPO, and GPO has no plans at this time to stock paper having a high recycled content.

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4. The Assistant Staff Director of the Joint Committee on Printing (JCP) advises that the JCP also does not plan to issue specifications calling for increased Government-wide use of recycled paper due to the number of recycling problems requiring solution before the success of an expanded program can be assured. Further, the JCP finds no merit in the several bills now proposed in this area by legislative representatives and expects none of them to be passed.

5. The remaining 10-15 percent of the Agency's paper supplies are obtained primarily through the General Services Administration's Federal Supply Service (FSS). Since the type of paper supplies provided by the FSS falls in the utilitarian category, i.e., paperboard, toweling, tissues, etc., these are presently adaptable to production through the recycling process. The Director of the Standards Division, FSS, advises that standard specifications have now been adopted for 14 of the various paper items which can be produced from recycled waste, and continued progress is planned. As the standards are adopted, the recycled items will be furnished to all Government agencies.

6. In summary, considerable research and development work remains to be done in perfecting the recycling process and the resulting products. It is concluded that the Office of Logistics should continue to keep abreast of all progress in this area and take action to expand the Agency's use of recycled paper products whenever their quality and cost are comparable to woodpulp products.

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Member  
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